

## Message Text

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65

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-10

NSAE-00 PA-02 SS-15 PRS-01 SP-02 USIA-15 TRSE-00

SAJ-01 DODE-00 H-02 NSC-05 IO-10 EA-09 NEA-10 OMB-01

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R 141711Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5182

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

UNCLAS BRUSSELS 9191

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MMOL, BE, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH INTEREST IN BELGIAN RIFLE, FN-CAL

1. BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTER REPLIED ON OCT 7 TO QUESTION  
RAISED IN PARLIAMENT ON AUG 29 ON WHETHER FRANCE HAD DECIDED  
TO DROP CONSIDERATION OF FN-CAL DUE TO BELGIAN SELECTION  
OF US F-16 OVER FRENCH MIRAGE F-1/M53.

2. QUESTION POSED AUG 29 WAS AS FOLLOWS IN EMBASSY SUMMARY  
TRANSLATION:

"FRENCH PRESS HAS REVEALED THAT FRENCH GOVERNMENT HAD  
DECIDED TO EQUIP FRENCH ARMY WITH A NEW RIFLE. AMONG THE  
CALIBER 5.56 WEAPONS AVAILABLE IN THE WEST ARE THE US M-16,  
THE GERMAN HK 33, THE JAPANESE ARMALITE AR-18, THE DUTCH G3 AI,  
THE ITALIAN BERETTA 10/233, THE ISRAELI GALIB, THE FRENCH  
MAS 5.56 AND THE BELGIAN FN-CAL. IT IS ALLEGED THAT THE FN-CAL,  
WHICH IS ONE OF THE BEST, HAS BEEN ELIMINATED ON ACCOUNT OF THE  
MIRAGE'S FAILURE IN THE 'ARMS DEAL OF THE CENTURY'. WOULD THE  
MINISTER PLEASE TELL ME: (A) WHETHER IT IS TRUE THE FRENCH  
GOVERNMENT PLANS TO REPLACE THE FRENCH ARMY'S RIFLES? (B) WHETHER  
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THE ISSUE WAS DISCUSSED AT THE GOVERNMENTAL AND INTER-GOVERNMENTAL

LEVELS WHEN THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT DECIDED NOT TO BUY THE MIRAGE?  
(C) IF AT THAT TIME OR LATER, THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT OR ONE OF  
ITS MINISTERS WAS ADVISED OF THE FRENCH DECISION TO ELIMINATE THE  
FN-CAL FROM CONSIDERATION? (D) WHAT STEPS THE BELGIAN GOVERNMENT  
HAS TAKEN TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE BELGIAN RIFLE?

3. VAN ELSLANDE REPLIED AS FOLLOWS: "(A) IT IS CORRECT THAT  
FRENCH GOVERNMENT PLANS TO EQUIP ITS ARMY WITH A NEW RIFLE.  
DISCUSSIONS HAVE BEEN UNDERWAY WITH FN FOR SEVERAL YEARS.  
(B) THE ISSUE WAS RAISED AT THE GOVERNMENTAL LEVEL DURING  
NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE PURCHASE OF FRENCH MATERIAL, ESPECIALLY  
DURING NEGOTIATIONS OVER THE F-104 REPLACEMENT. (C) THE FRENCH  
GOVERNMENT HAS NOT YET TAKEN ANY DECISIONS. IN ANY CASE, THE  
BELGIAN GOVERNMENT HAS NOT BEEN INFORMED OF ANY QUESTION OF  
PRINCIPLE EXCLUDING THE BELGIAN OFFER (SIC). (D) THE BELGIAN  
GOVERNMENT IS PURSUING AT DIFFERENT LEVELS WITH THE FRENCH, ITS  
ACTION TO PROMOTE THE BELGIAN OFFER." FIRESTONE

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